THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF WITCHCRAFT,

Plainly proving,

From **Scripture** and **Reason**, That there never was a WITCH; and that it is both Irrational and Impious to believe there ever was.

In which the

DEPOSITIONS AGAINST Jane Wenham,

Lately Try'd and Condemn'd for a WITCH, at *Hertford*, are Confuted and Expos'd.

Somnia, Terrores Magicos, Miracula, Sagas,
Nocturnas Lemures, Portentaq; Theſſala rides. Hor.
Deme Veneficiis, Carminibuſq; fidem. Ovid.

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THE PREFACE.

UPON the repeated Solicitations of many Letters from my Correſpondents, who have approv'd of the following Papers, and been urgent for Publiſhing them together in one Pamphlet for the General Good, they make their Appearance after this Manner. But becauſe ſome have been pleas'd to obſerve, That it is a very odd Thing that our Laws Impower *Judges* to put People to Death for *Witchcraft*, if there is no ſuch Thing as a *Witch* in the World; *and others affirm*, That the Records of *Juſtice* are full of Inſtances, in all Ages, of the Truth of *Witchcraft*, which, in their Opinion, amounts to a Demonſtration. *I ſhall, for the Satiſfaction of the Firſt, have Recourſe to ſuch Laws as have been Enacted here in* England *concerning it, as alſo thoſe that have been made in Foreign Countries; and to quiet the Minds of the laſt, ſhew them how far off their Surmiſes are from any Thing that bears the Face of Reality.*

To begin with the Firſt, It is ſaid that the 33d of Henry VIII. *was the firſt Statute againſt Witchcraft, one Clauſe of which is,* Or for the

Deſpight of Chriſt, or Lucre of Money to pull down any Croſs; *and is there made Felony, which ſhews, that this Statute was partly made upon Account of the Religion which then prevail'd, and that this Crime was as Capital as to conſume any Perſon in his Body, Members, or Goods; ſo ſuperſtitious was this Nation in thoſe Days; but this Statute was afterwards repeal'd in ſeveral Reigns, viz.* Ed. 6. Cap. 12. 1 Mar. Cap. 1. *which perhaps thoſe Two Parliaments never would have done, without making another againſt* Witches, *if they had believ'd there were any ſuch Creatures; this Repealing being a Kind of Legal Toleration for* Witches, *there being no Common Law whereby to puniſh them. But what Reaſon the Parliament had to make this firſt Statute againſt* Witches, *or what Inducement the next Two Reigns had to repeal it, or what Motives the ſucceeding Reigns to make more ſevere Laws againſt them, may be worth Enquiry, conſidering that* Witchcraft *has always been the ſame in all Ages.*

We are likewiſe inform'd, That the firſt Perſons who were condemn'd for Witches, *ſuffer'd in the Year* 1300, *when* Frederick *the Second made a Law for Burning of* Hereticks; *and that the Inquiſitors having judg'd the Crime of* Witchcraft *to be* Hereſy, *and that to be a* Witch *was the ſame Thing to the* Pope, *as to be a Traytor to a Temporal Prince; they did in* Rome, Spain, *&c. condemn, by that Law, ſuppos'd* Witches *as* Hereticks, *becauſe* Witches *had renounc'd their* Baptiſmal Vow, *and ador'd* Satan: *And this they did to Eſtabliſh the uſurp'd Dominion of the* Pope, *and for their own Profit, they having a Share*

Share in the Goods and Eſtates of ſuch Perſons ſo condemn'd: And probably this Law, and the Example of the Inquiſitions have been the chief Grounds that other Countries, in particular, England, *did afterwards make Laws of the ſame Tendency, and puniſh'd* Witches *in like Manner, ever ſince; till the Statute of* De Heretico comburendo *was repealed. For, according to* Coke's *Inſtitute 3d, Part* 44, 46, *it ſeems as if before this Statute of* Henry VIII. Witches *were always Try'd by Eccleſiaſtical Laws and Judges, and condemn'd as* Hereticks *or* Apoſtates, *and that the Cognizance of Perſons under theſe Circumſtances, was by this Statute transform'd from an Eccleſiaſtical to a Temporal Judicature, as they were Killing* Witches, *not as* Hereticks *and* Apoſtates.

In Anſwer to the Second Propoſition I ſhall take the Liberty to declare, that the Records mention'd therein cannot amount to a Demonſtration. For if, even Glanvil *himſelf Speaks true, who ſays,* Fol. 103, That we are Ignorant of the Extents and Bounds of Nature's Sphere, and Poſſibilities, *it will follow that We are uncertain whether thoſe Facts for which* Witches, *have been condemn'd were really done by* Witchcraft, *or produc'd by the Courſe of Nature: And can this Uncertainty amount to a Demomſtration? . Judges, for Intereſt's ſake, have ſuffer'd themſelves to be impos'd upon by* Falſe Witneſſes, *and ſo condemn'd Innocent Perſons for Things they were never Guilty of: And can the Records of thoſe Condemnations amount to a Demonſtration? 3. Judges have condemn'd Innocent Perſons for Facts that were Impoſſible*

Impoſſible to be done: And can the Records of theſe Facts amount to a Demonſtration? 4. *Judges have condemn'd many Innocent Perſons upon the Teſtimony of Pretended* Witchfinders, *who being Authoriz'd and Encourag'd by great Perſons (even of the Miniſtry) were ſent abroad into* Scotland, *and* Northumberland, *who made Affidavit that, upon Search, they had found ſuppos'd* Witch-marks, *by putting Sharp Pins and Needles into Warts, and Excreſcenſcies of divers Perſons who did not at all Complain, and can the Records of theſe Matters amount to a Demonſtration?* 5. *The Judges themſelves are not Infallible, and may, perhaps, have Erroneous Notions of theſe Dark and Abſtruſe Matters, and condemn* Witches *wrongfully, as it is ſaid, a Biſhop of* Mentz *was Excommunicated for holding that there were* Antipodes, *by ſome Hundreds of Men that were accounted Learned and Wiſe, and do theſe Records of* Witchcraft *any more amount to a Domonſtration, than this Excommunication did of there being no ſuch Creatures as* Antipodes? *Thoſe Biſhops, probably, were as Knowing and Prudent, as the Inquiſitors or our own Judges; and the Demonſtrations of the* Antipodes *is far more Obvious and Intelligible than thoſe impoſſible Inſtances of* Witchcraft, *for which* 2000 *poor Souls have been Innocently Condemn'd: Which Conſiderations may caution our Juries not to be ſo haſty in declaring People Guilty of a Crime, that is a meer* Ens Rationis, *which has its Reſidence only in Weak and Cowardly Underſtandings and Tempers.*

I ſhould here, according to the Deſire of ſome Perſons, enter into the Merits of the ſeveral Depoſitions that are inſerted at large in the Full and

and Impartial Account, *which are Sixteen in Number, but out of Reſpect to the Sacred Habit which Two of them Wear, and the Incapacities of the other Fourteen, diſmiſs them to their Reſpective Bedchambers, with no farther Remarks than, that the Inconſiſtencies which they are Guilty of, ſhew they very much ſtand in need of Reſt, ſince a Crazie Body very often Indiſpoſes the Soul, and Influences the Mind to entertain Strange and Preternatural Ideas of Things that have no Manner of Exiſtence.*

But I muſt not Suffer my Reader to go uniform'd about the large Additions that have been made to the Diſcourſe he is now entring upon the Peruſal of, and am to prmeiſe that he has it now entirely, as it was at firſt Deſign'd, tho' purpoſely omitted in the Proteſtant Poſt-Boy *for fear of giving him a Surfeit through too great a Satiety from one Subject.*

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THE Impoſſibility OF Witchcraft.

THE Diſcourſe of the Town having been very much taken up, for ſome Days paſt, with a Trifling Pamphlet, in Vindication of the Tryal of one *Jane Wenham*, a Reputed Witch, whom that Enemy to Superſtition, the very Worſhipful Sir *Henry Chauncy*, *gravely* Committed, without *Laughing*, to *Hertford* Goal; where ſhe was Try'd and found Guilty (againſt the Judge's Will) of *Converſing with the* Devil in the ſhape of a Cat, *making a Maid that could not Walk without Leading*, leap over a Five-Bar Gate, *and run as ſwift as a Grey-hound*, with ſeveral other Incredibles; it may not be improper to diſabuſe the People, who too eaſily give into the Belief of

ſuch Stories, and receive Impreſſions from them not ſo eaſily to be defaced. *Cicero*, in *Lib.* 2. *de Divin*, ſays, *Nam ut vere loquamur, Superſtitio fuſa per Orbem oppreſſit omnium fere animos atq; Hominum occupavit Imbecillitatem.* For to ſpeak the Truth, Superſtition having over-run the World, hath daſtared almoſt every ones Spirits, taking its Advantage from the Frailty of Man. And ſtrange it is to conſider, how far the Folly of Mankind hath proceeded in their Credulity concerning the Actions both of Male and Female Witches: As if, forſooth, they could Tranſform Men and Women into Beaſts; as if they could Deſtroy the Fruits of the Earth, and the Fruits of the Womb, at their Pleaſure; as if they could raiſe Winds and Tempeſts, or alay them, enable or diſable, in Matters Venerial; in a Word, as if they could enſlave Nature herſelf, and make the Univerſe Obey their Commands. Examples, indeed, of this Prodigious Power, are ſcatter'd up and down the Roman Poets, ſuch as *Virgil*, *Horace*, *Ovid*, *Tibullus*, *Propertius*, *Lucan*, *&c.* But that it has any Foundation in Holy Scripture, or takes its Riſe otherwiſe than from Heatheniſh Fables, afterwards improv'd by Papal Impoſtors, muſt always, by me, be deny'd.

'Tis true, our Tranſlators of the Bible, in the Eighteenth Chapter of *Deuteronomy*, call a *Conjecturer* an *Enchanter*, which why they ſhould, I cannot at all imagine, there being

being not the leaſt Hint of ſuch a Signification in the *Hebrew* Word *Mankeſh*, which is far better render'd in the old Tranſlation, *a Regarder of the Flying of Fowls*; for that is Truth, tho' it be not *all* the Truth, the Flight of Fowls being but One way of Many, which Conjecturers made uſe of. A Second Miſtake of our Tranſlators, in the ſame Chapter, is, their calling a *Miracle-monger* a *Witch*: The *Hebrew* Word is *Mickſhaph*, which the *Septuagint* renders by the Greek word φάρμακος, meaning an *Impoſtor*, not a *Poiſoner*. For it is Ridiculous to think, that *Pharaoh*'s Magicians, *Jezabel* the Queen, and King *Manaſſes* did exerciſe the Art of Poiſoning. Thus in the Eighteenth Chapter of the *Revelations*, and the Twenty third Verſe, the Word φαρμακείαι is neither taken for *Witchcraft*. or *Poiſons*, but for *Impoſtures*, tho' our Tranſlations have render'd it *Witchcraft*.

Now theſe Miracle-mongers or Jugling workers of Counterfeit Miracles are therefore ſo ſeverely prohibited in the Law of *Moſes*, becauſe they acted ſtrange things in the ſight of the People to confirm them in falſe Religions. Hence it is that in the *Old Teſtament*, where mention is made of Idolatry, you ſhall frequently meet with *Micacle-mongers* and *Southſayers* coupled together. For the Prieſts of an Idol would commonly advance its Reputation by countefeiting the Gifts of Propheſying and Working Miracles,

pretendedly receiv'd from that God to whoſe Honour the Idol was Erected. Nor let any one think that for the Performance of theſe *Counterfeit Miracles*, they ſtood in need of the Devils Aſſiſtance; for what they perform'd, either exceeded not the Compaſs of Human Art, altho' miraculous in the Eyes of the Vulgar: Or if it did, then it was not really perform'd, but a mere *Juggling* Impoſture. Such kind of *Jugglers* were thoſe who ſtood before *Pharaoh*, in oppoſition to *Moſes* and *Aaron:* For whoſoever believes that *Pharaoh*'s Magicians could, by the help of the Devil, turn, in an inſtant, a Stick into a Serpent, aſcribes to the Devil an Omnipotent Creating Power, equal unto his, who did but ſay, *Let ſuch a thing be*, and it was ſo. St. *Auguſtine*, I confeſs, does ſeem to endeavour at the Evading this Objection, by laying down a Maxim, *That in the Elements the Seeds of all bodies ſecretly lie hid, which, upon meeting with Convenient Opportunities, do put forth themſelves and ariſe to the juſt Bounds and Figures due to their reſpective Species.* From hence he Infers, That the Devil, in turning Magicians Rods into Serpents, did not *Create* thoſe Serpents, becauſe he produc'd them out of their Seeds. But by St. *Auguſtine*'s good Leave, tho' I ſhould grant him, that the Seed of a Serpent is in a Stick, yet I can never allow the Magicians to be able ſo ſuddenly to bring forth this Seed into Act, for the Production of a Serpent. 'Tis true, That Men, by their well

well ordering the Seeds of Plants, may haſten the Generation of ſuch Plants, and the ripening of their Fruits: They may alſo by putting Eggs into Camels Dung, procure the Generation of Chickens. Wherefore 'tis probable that Devils, being more skilful than Men, may ſtrangely promote the Generation of ſeveral Creatures beyond any humane Art: But yet neither Men, nor Devils, in regard they act theſe Things by the Application of Matter to Matter, can produce any creature out of its Seed, without a conſiderable ſpace of Time. No, they muſt attend the Laws of *Matter*, and wait upon Dame Nature's Leiſure: there being many ſucceſſive Alterations required in Seed, before it can come to the Embryo of a Creature, and many alſo muſt afterwards follow, before the Embryo can Arrive to a perfect ſhape.

The Third Error of our Tranſlators is, their miſtaking a Conſulter with Oracles or Falſe Prophets, for a Conſulter with Familiar Spirits. The *Hebrew* Words are אוֹב שׁאל, which Word *Ob* ſignifies in Scripture, ſometimes the Gift of Oracling, and ſometimes the Perſon that hath ſuch a Gift. It ſignifies alſo a Bottle or hollow Veſſel, and from this ſignification, I ſuppoſe the other came. For it is certain that *Oracles* did uſe to counterfeit ſtrange kind of Voices, that they might ſeem not to be humane. To this purpoſe, 'tis not unlikely that they made uſe of a Bottle,

Bottle, or Trunk, or ſome other hollow Veſſel, which they ſpoke through, whereby their Voices muſt needs be very much altered, eſpecially if they were in a Cave or Room under Ground, when they made Anſwer to Enquiries. Theſe kind of Cheating Tricks are plainly alluded to by the Prophet *Iſaiah* in theſe Words; *And thy Voice ſhall be as an Oracler out of the Earth, and thy Speech ſhall piep out of the Duſt.* Here I ſuppoſe the Prophet chiefly hints at the *Necromantick Oracler*, or one that pretended to Conſult with the Dead: Who by Himſelf, or his Confederate, did counterfeit a Voice like the *pieping* of a Chicken, that it might the more plauſibly ſeem to be the ſmall Voice of a poor departed Ghoſt.

I could produce many other Inſtances of the like nature, which the Tranſlation of the Bible by *Junius* and *Tremellius*, gives us a Light into; but ſhall Content my ſelf, with bringing ſome Arguments to prove in the firſt Place, That *this ſtrange Notion of* Witchcraft, *has its Foundation in Heathen Fables. Secondly*, I ſhall take upon me to affirm, That it has been improv'd by Papal Inquiſitous for the ſake of Private Intereſt. *Thirdly*, I ſhall prove, That there is no ſuch Thing, as a *Witch* in Scripture. *Fourthly*, I ſhall endeavour to make appear, There is no ſuch thing as a *Witch* at all; and produce ſeveral Arguments againſt the Affirmers of *Witchcraft*. *Fifthly*, I ſhall anſwer other Arguments

ments to the contrary. *Sixthly* and *Laſtly*, I ſhall ſhew by what means this Opinion of *Witchcraft* came into the World.

To begin with my *firſt Particular*. Such was the vain Credulity of Men in the Heathen Ages; that they did not only believe thoſe Things were real, which the Prieſts counterfeited; but they alſo aſcribed unto private Perſons, a Power equal to that of the Prieſts, or rather beyond it. For not only Men, but Women, eſpecially Old Women have been famous for Propheſying of Things to come, whence they were call'd *Sagæ*; as alſo for Wonderful and Miraculous Exploits, whence they took the Name of *Lamiæ* or *Veneficæ*. They were call'd *Lamiæ* chiefly from their Adventures among little Children. For it ſeems, according to the Fable, there was one *Lamia* a Beautiful Woman in *Lybia*, whom *Jupiter* fell in Love with; but *Juno*, out of Jealouſy, took her Children which ſhe had by *Jupiter* and killed them; wherefore ſhe out of mere Grief for the Death of her own Children, made it her Practice to kill thoſe of other Women. They were ſtyl'd *Veneficæ*, becauſe they were wont to make uſe of Herbs, which they ſuppos'd had ſtrange kiud of Vertues in them, for with Herbs or Charms they always acted.

Num te Carminibus, num te pallentibus Herbis
Devovit tacito tempore noctis Annus?

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As for the Opinions concerning *Incubi* and *Succubi* Devils, It's manifeſt, they had their Riſe from the Fables of the Antient Hero's, who (as *Socrates* in *Plato*'s *Cratylus* affirms) were begotten from the Conjunction of Deities with Human Creatures; which kind of Conjunction, whoſoever believes, makes that Belief of his, a Cloak for the Adulteries of the Heathen Prieſts, who often lay with other Mens Wives, pretending that the Gods had vouchſafed them the Honour of their Company. Very Remarkable to this Purpoſe, is the Story of *Tyrannus* a Prieſt of *Saturn*, who under this Pretence had carnal Knowledge of many a Man's Wife, till at laſt one more Wiſe than the Reſt, diſcover'd the Cheat. In like manner *Mundus* a Gentleman of *Rome*, by the help of the Prieſts belonging to the Temple of *Iſis*, enjoy'd his Pleaſure on *Paulina* a *Roman* Lady, who miſtook him for the God *Anubis*.

Now one wou'd think that theſe Heathenish Fables and Follies, *to come to my ſecond Particular*, altho' they took Root in the Minds of the Chriſtian Vulgar, ſhould never have been Aſſented to by thoſe who account themſelves Rabbies and Doctors of the People; yet there is nothing of this Nature that was Credited by thoſe Barbarous Ages, that hath not been declar'd True by the Inquiſition and by the Canon Law. Wherefore it may not be amiſs, to enquire into thoſe Inquiſitors. The firſt Time that I can hear News of them

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in History is in the Days of *Maximus* who contended with *Theodosius* for the Empire: Though I confess an Inquisition was then but Intended, not brought to Effect. This *Maximus*, was the first who put Hereticks to Death, namely *Priscilian* and his Partners, by the Perswasion of one *Ithacius*, and if it had not been for St. *Martin*, he would have sent Tribunes into *Spain*, with Power to search for Hereticks, and to take away their Lives and Goods. In process of time, *Charlemain*, who was Crowned Emperor in the Eighth Hundred Year after Christ, did by his Laws or Capitulars, declare the Bishop of *Rome* to be Head of the Church. Nevertheless all those Capitulars, which concern'd the Roman Supremacy, were extracted from forg'd Authorities, that Cheat being put upon them by the Bishops of *Mentz*. About Three Hundred years after, in the year One Thousand one Hundred Twenty two, the Emperor *Henry* the Fifth was forced to resign his Power of Electing and Investing Bishops with the Staff and Ring into the Hands of the Church; of which the Roman Pontiff being declar'd Head, by this Means obtain'd a greater Empire and Power, than ever the Roman *Cæsars* had. This being perceiv'd by the German Emperors, there was almost a perpetual War between them and the Bishops of *Rome:* But especially *Frederick* the Second, who flourish'd in the beginning of the 13th Century, and spent most of his Reign in endeavouring to take down the Church from overtopping the Em-

pire. Nevertheleſs, it was in his Reign that the *Roman* Biſhops made notable Proviſion for the Security of their Exorbitant Power; Then it was that *Frederick* the Second, when he was at *Padua*, made thoſe unhappy Laws, whereby Hereticks were liable to the Puniſhment of Death; of which Laws the Popes made very great Advantage. Then it was that *Gregory* the Ninth advanced the Authority of Canon or Pontifical Laws, by Compoſing the Decretals by the help of his Chaplain *Raymund:* Then it was, that the Orders of the *Dominican* and *Franciſcan* Fryars were founded, to whom was committed the Inquiſition after Hereticks.

Theſe Monks at their firſt ſetting up for Inquiſitors, as Father *Paul* has obſerved in the Hiſtory of the Inquiſition, had no Tribunal or Courts of their own, but did only Preach, and ſtir up Princes and People, engaging them into *Cruſadoes* againſt Hereticks, by ſewing a piece of Red Cloth in the form of a Croſs upon their Garments. But *Innocent* the Fourth, who begun his Pontificate about the latter end of *Frederick* the Second, obſerving the furious Zeal of the Fryars, thought good to Erect a Tribunal for them, that ſo they themſelves might proceed to the Tryal of Hereticks. To bring this about he had a fair opportunity upon the Death of *Frederick*, by reaſon of the vacancy that then happen'd in the Empire for many years: For now having no Emperor to controul Him in *Italy*, He took the Confidence to impoſe the Inquiſition upon

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the ſeveral Provinces of it. There are Extant ſeveral Bulls, written by *Innocent* the Fourth to the Magiſtrates of thoſe Countries: One of which ſets down the forementioned Laws of *Frederick* againſt Hereticks Word for Word, and commands them to be ſtrictly obſerved. Nor can I blame him for holding his Eccleſiaſtical Empire upon no other Title than the Pretence of Religion. To be a Heretick muſt needs be the ſame thing to Him and his Succeſſors, as to be a Traytor to Temporal Princes. Hence it came to paſs, that, when the Inquiſition had gotten Foot in many Kingdoms and Countries, an incredible Number of People were frequently Tormented and Burn'd for the Crime of *Witchcraft*, which they had ſo twiſted and blended with Hereſie, or the Denyal of Pontifical Authority, that in ſeeking out *Witches*, in Tormenting and putting them to Death, they did at once gratify, as well the Ambition and uſurp'd Power of their Lord the Pope, as their own inſatiable Covetouſneſs and Thirſt after other Mens Goods. In the year 1518. the Inquiſitors put to Death abundance of Inchanters, which they had found in the *Venetian* Territories, where ſuch was the Extortion and Avarice of their Proceedings, that the Country roſe up againſt them, and the Council afterwards was fain to ſend for theſe Inquiſitors, and enquire into their Proceedings, to pacify the enrag'd Populace. The Inquiſition was likewiſe ſettled in *Lorrain* much about the ſame Time, where according to the Confeſſion of *Nicholaus Remigius*, who ad-

judg'd them to Death, in Sixteen years time, there were 800 *Witches* Executed. In a Word, after the Founding of the *Dominican* and *Franciſcan* Fryars, and the ſetting up an Office of Inquiſition, the World grew ſo full of *Devils* and *VVitches*, that I am apt to give into the Judgment of *Cardan*, who handling this Buſineſs of *VVitches* and *VVitch-finders*, obſerv'd it to be full of Covetouſneſs and Folly, as any one may read in his Book *de Varietate Rerum*.

By this Time methinks it plainly appears out of the preceding Diſcourſe, that the Notion of a *VVitch*, as it is taken now a-days, has no Foundation at all in Scripture; but had its original or firſt Riſe out of Heatheniſh Fables, and was afterwards improv'd by Papal Impoſtures: Nevertheleſs, to make good my Promiſe, I ſhall produce ſome Arguments to prove, 3*dly*, That a *VVitch* is not to be found in Scripture. And 4*thly*, That there is no ſuch Thing as a *VVitch* at all.

The firſt Argument ſhall be taken from the Difference between our Vulgarly reputed *Witches*, and thoſe which our Tranſlators of the Bible call ſo. For whom, I pray, do our Tranſlators call *Witches*, but the Kings and Queens, and Princes of the Earth, as alſo the Prieſts and Philoſophers, and Wiſe Men of this World? Whereas the *Witches*, now-a-days, are poor, ſilly, contemptible People; for inſtead of ſuch as King *Manaſſes*, and Queen *Jezabel*, we now hear talk of this old *Gammer*, and this old *Goodwife*. It ſeems the *Kingdom of Darkneſs* is quite alter'n in its Politicks, and the Devil is not ſo Wiſe as

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ſome Men make him, if the Opinion of *Witchcraft* holds good.

The ſecond Argument ſhall be taken from the *Sadduces*, a famous Sect among the *Jews*, who deny'd Spirits, and the Reſurrection of the dead; yet had the Five Books of *Moſes* in high Eſteem and Regard; wherefore either they did not underſtand *Hebrew*, or if they did, the Notion of *Witchcraft* did not appear in *Moſes*. And if this be once granted, I ſuppoſe the other Parts of the Bible will eaſily follow. But, perhaps, you'll Object, and ſay, That the *Sadduces* were a Sect after the Captivity, which kept the *Jews* ſo long in *Babylon*, that they forgot their own Tongue, and that the *Jews*, after their Return into *Judea*, ſpoke not the *Hebrew*, but the Vulgar *Syrian*. To this I Anſwer, That when the Sect of the *Sadduces* took its Beginning, is uncertain, and that however the Common People did forget the old *Hebrew*, yet the Prieſts did always preſerve its knowledge. Now that Prieſts themſelves were *Sadduces*, is Manifeſt, for even the High-Prieſt *Joſeph Hircanus*, was one of that Sect, according to the Teſtimony of *Joſephus*.

The third, and laſt Argument, ſhall be taken from the Different Practices, aſcrib'd unto our Vulgarly Suppos'd *Witches*, and unto thoſe in our own Tranſlation of the Bible. For our Modern *Witches* practice a ſecret Occult Art, and it requires great Skill to diſcover them by ſeveral ſtrange Signs and horrid Tortures. But thoſe whom our Tranſlators call *Witches*, in the Bible, were ſuch

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as practiſed what they did Openly, and in the Face of the World, making Publick Profeſſion of their Art, which was the Counterfeit Art of *Propheſying*, and *Working Miracles*. But, alas! had it been this Myſterious Art of *Contracting with the Devil*, and of *uſing his Power*, the Profeſſors whereof are ſo Clandeſtine in their Ways, that they can hardly be diſcover'd by various Scrutinies and Enquiries; how impoſſible a Thing had it been for *Saul* to turn them all out of *Iſrael*, as we read he did, 1 *Sam.* 28. This I am ſure of, a Proclamation now-a-days ſet out to that Purpoſe, would avail nothing, and only ſerve to move the Laughter of all thoſe that ſtood by to hear it.

If there be no ſuch Thing as a *Witch* in Scripture, as I have Vanity enough to think I have prov'd in my laſt, I ſhall make uſe of that, as my firſt Argument, to prove *there is no ſuch Thing as a* Witch *at all*; which was my ſecond Propoſal. Nor let any one, thereupon, that abounds with Words, and his own Senſe, cry out, then there is no ſuch River as the *Thames*, there is no ſuch Country as *America*, if ſilence in Scripture ſerves for an Argument. A Man may make ſuch Inſtances from Morning to Night, and a great Noiſe to no Purpoſe; as if there were no Difference between thoſe Things that lie quite beſides the Scriptures Notice, and thoſe Things which, if they be True, the Scriptures could not be ſilent about, without the Charge of Imperfection. For let any one but read the Law of *Moſes*, and then ſeriouſly conſider, why it ſhould be ſo

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ſevere againſt Inceſtuous and Beaſtial Concubinage, and yet not ſo much as mention Diabolical. The *Jews* were forbid to meddle with Strange Women of other Nations, and ſhould there be no Caution given againſt their meddling with ſtrange Creatures, as it were of another World? Obſerve how curious the Law is in matters of Uncleanneſs, and ſhall an ordinary Running Iſſue be ſo much Talk'd of, and no Mention made of Teats running with Blood and ſuck'd by Devils? *Laſtly*, That Law which by its Years of Jubilee, and ſeveral other Conſtitutions, provided more againſt Oppreſſion and Cruelty than any other Law in the World; that Law which ſo deteſted the Murther of Men, that it made them Merciful to their Neighbours Beaſts; I ſay, that Law could never paſs over in Silence, the Cruel and Abominable Actions of *Witches*, againſt both Man and Beaſt. Without queſtion it would have inflicted upon them the ſevereſt Puniſhments, and for the Diſcovery of their Secret and Deviliſh Contracts, it would have laid down ſufficient Rules for Trial; eſpecially ſince, in a far leſs Matter, that of *Adultery*, it made uſe of that horrible and amazing Tryal, by the *Bitter Water*, which cauſed the Curſe.

Secondly, I Argue from the miſerable *Poverty* of our Vulgarly reputed *Witches*, (ſuch as is the Woman that gives Being to theſe Reflections) that they are wrongfully accus'd. For I am not willing to believe, that they have ſuch a Power with the Devil, as to make him do wonderful Things at their Com-

Command, when they never command him to fetch them Money, and to furniſh them with Bread. Indeed, in the Night Time he carries them I know not whither, and there they meet with great variety of imaginary Mirth and Feaſting. Now ſuch as their Feaſt is, ſuch is their *Witchcraft*, not real; but imaginary, as only exiſting in the wild Fancies of Men.

In the *Third Place*, I charge thoſe who obſtinately maintain *there are Witches*, either with *Irrationality* or *Impiety*: For 'tis irrational to think, that the Devils are Creatures full of Malice, and breathing nothing but Miſchief againſt the whole Race of Man, and that they ſuffer a Man to live, when they can ſo eaſily kill us at the Command of a *Witch*. But if you evade this, by ſaying, *That Devils cannot hurt us without the Divine Permiſſion*; Then, I ſay, 'tis Impious to concern the Great God with *Witchcraft*. 'Tis true indeed, he may ſend Death and Diſeaſes amongſt the Sons of Men, to puniſh them for their Sins at his own pleaſure; but that he ſhould do ſo at the deſire of the Devil, at the command of a *Witch*, is ſuch a Gratification of Malice, as is far from God to perform. *Calvin*, in his Sermons on the two firſt Dhapters of *Job*, takes a great deal of pains to explode this Opinion *of God's Permiſſion*, and ſhews, by ſeveral Examples of *Abſolon*, *Ahab*, and *Nebuchadnezzar*, that God doth not barely permit, but orders and determines the Actions of Devils and Wicked Men; affirming, *That if Aſſes could ſpeak,*

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they would ſpeak Wiſer than thoſe Men who talk of God's Permiſſion after this Rate: Nor will he grant, that God afflicted *Job* upon Satan's Requeſt; but becauſe he himſelf had ſo determin'd to try *Job*'s Patienee.

Laſtly, The Vanity and Falſeneſs of their Opinion who believe there are *Witches*, appears from nothing more than from this, That it aſcribes unto the Devil *an Omnipotent Power:* Inſomuch, that no Rational Man, by the Light of Reaſon, ſhall be able to tell, from the Hiſtory of the Goſpel, whether our Saviour himſelf were a *Witch* or no; for let ſome Men think what they pleaſe, the Holineſs of his Doctrine is not by the Thouſandth Part ſuch a Proof of Acting by a Divine Power, as the Miraculouſneſs of his Works. But, alaſs! What were his Miracles, or how were they valued, if Malicious Creatures, without a Divine Commiſſion enabling them thereto, can make Frogs and Serpents, raiſe the Dead, give Law to the Winds and Seas, to mention no more of thoſe prodigious Works aſcribed unto the Devils upon the Account of *Witchcraft?* For my part, I am apt to think, that thoſe who believe after this manner, approach very near to the Opinion of the *Perſians*, who held there were Two Great Beings, both Almighty, both at mutual and perpetual War; one the Author of all Good, the other of all Evil. The *Good Principle* they called *Oromaſdes*, and the *Evil one*, *Arimanias*. Of the ſame Opinion were the *Egyptians*, as appears by *Oſiris* and *Typhon*, and from them *Pithagoras* carry'd it

to *Greece*. In a Word, the whole Heathen World ſeem to be infected with this Conceit, believing Infernal as well as Supernal Gods; and therefore they had Sacrifices as well to appeaſe the Anger, and to avert the Miſchiefs of the one, as to propitiate, and procure the Bleſſings of the other. Nor can thoſe Chriſtians be excus'd from the ſame Infection, who, upon the Account of *Witchcraft*, attribute Omnipotency to the Devil; for what leſs do they believe, concerning the Prince of the Devil and his Power, if according to them, he can command the Influence of the Sun, and Govern the Motion of the Stars: If he can open the Bowels of the Earth, and cauſe the Vapours to aſcend in Clouds into the Middle Region of the Air, and thence, again, deſcend upon the Earth, in Thunder and Lightening and violent Storms; If he can Transform Men and Women into Cats, and if he can Create Frogs and Serpents. Wherefore I conclude, it was a very ſeaſonable Decree made by the Council of *Ancyra*, more Antient than the *Nicene* Council, wherein they declare unto all Chriſtians, the Heatheniſhneſs of this Belief and Opinion. Which is manifeſt, appears only in the Writings of that Superſtitious Age, one Inſtance of which, inſtead of the many other that could be produc'd on this Subject, I ſhall give from *Hypſipbele*'s Deſcription of *Medea*.

Illa reluctantem cuaſu deducere Lunam
Nititur, & tenebris abdere Solis equos.
Illa refrænat aquas, obliquaq; Flumina ſiſtit;
Illa loco ſylvas, vivaq; ſaxa movet.

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Per Tumulous errat, ſparſis diſtincta Capillis,
Certaq; de tepidis colligit oſſa Rogis.
Devovet abſentes, ſimulachraq; Cerea fligit
Et miſerum tenues in Jecur urget Acus.

She from her Courſe the *ſtruggling Moon* would
The Sun himſelf in Magick Shades infold: (hold
She curbs the Waves, and ſtops the rapid Floods,
And from her ſeat removes whole Rocks & Woods.
With her diſhevel'd Hair the wandring Hag,
Does *half-burnt Bones* from their *warm Aſhes* drag.
In molten Wax, tho' abſent, kills by Art,
Arm'd with her Needle, goars a tortur'd Heart.

'Tis true indeed, the Pontifical Authors make a great ſtir in their Anſwers to the abovemention'd Decree of the *Ancyran* Council, ſometimes endeavouring to evade its Force with their abſurd Interpretations, ſometimes to throw Dirt into the Face of the Council, as if it were not to be regarded: But *Alciat* in his *Parerga*, does ingeniouſly confeſs, that in theſe their Anſwers, *nec Cœlum, nec Terram attingunt*, they have neither Head nor Tail. And which is more to be wonder'd at, *Martin Delrio* the Jeſuit is in this point ſo very impartial, as to diſſent from *Baronius*, who judges that this Council was held at *Rome* under *Damaſcus*, in the Days of St. *Hierom*: *Delrio* for ſundry Reaſons, believing it to have been really held at *Ancyra* the Metropolis of *Galatia*, according to the Common Aſſertion of thoſe who Collected the Antient Canons.

For this Decree of the *Ancyran* Council was the more neceſſary, in regard that a little before *Manes*, or *Manicheus* had ſpread abroad, through the whole Chriſtian World, that old Heatheniſh Doctrine of *the Two Prin-*

ciples, one of Good and the other of Evil: And it is remarkable, That *Witches* and *Manicheans* are coupled together by the Emperors *Diocleſian* and *Maximian*, in their Preſcript to *Julian* the Proconſul of *Africa*, *de Maleficis, & Manichœis*, as it is cited out of the *Gregorian* Code, by *Ruffinus*, in his Collation of the *Jewiſh* with the *Roman* Laws. About a Hundred Years after, and ſome what more, *Priſcillian* and his Followers, did, in a great Meaſure, embrace the Doctrine of *Manes*, inſomuch that in the Year Five Hundred Sixty Three, there was a Council held at *Bracara*, a Town of *Galicia* in *Spain*, againſt the *Priſcillianiſts*. In the Decrees of this Council *Manes* and *Priſcillian* are frequently join'd together, for their Fooliſh Conceits, concerning the Power of the Devil, or Evil Principle; but eſpecially they have one Decree very applicable to our preſent Purpoſe, wherein they Anathematize all thoſe, who believe that the Devil can make any Creature, or ſo much as raiſe Storms and Tempeſts by his own Authority and Power: The Words are theſe, *Si quis credit, quod aliquantas in Mundo Creaturas Diabolus fecerit, & Tonitrua, & Fulgura, & Tempeſtates, & Siccitates, ipſe Diabolus ſua Authoritate faciat, ſicut* Priſcillianus *dixit, Anathema ſit.* If any one believes that the Devil can form or make any Creatures, or that the Infernal Spirit, by the Means of his own Power, can create Thunder and Lightning, and Rain, and Drowth, as *Priſcillian* has affirm'd, let him be *Excommunicated* and *Accurſed*. Wherefore if the Devil cannot raiſe Tempeſts by his own Sufficiency, he did no more

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in the Caſe of *Job* (which is always brought in as an Argument againſt it) than *Eliah*, or any Mortal Man may do, when he receiv's a Commiſſion from God. Hence I infer, That the Doctrine of *Witchcraft* magnifying the Diabolical Power beyond its due Proportion, doth ſavour too Rankly of *Priſcillian* and *Manes*, and the Heathen World.

And now it is worth the while, in the fifth Place, to conſider what theſe Men can ſay for themſelves, who ſo obſtinately maintain there are *Witches*; for they being on the Affirmative Part, are bound, by the Laws of Diſputation, to prove what they affirm, and 'tis ſufficient for their Adverſaries to confute their Proofs. But alas! theſe Men are generally ignorant of the Hiſtory of Ages that are gone and paſt, and of the Scriptures alſo, as to what concerns the Queſtion in Hand. Wherefore they are all wont to wave Argument, and to cry out, *This is a Queſtion not to be diſputed upon, in Regard it is a Matter of Fact, and conſequently the Object of Senſe, and not of Reaſon.* Thus, when they are got to their Caſtle of Defence, they make a great Noiſe, and cry out upon the Unreaſonableneſs of others, who will not believe what ſo many *Worſhipful Perſons* in the World have heard and ſeen. And what is that, I pray? Why they have heard Trumpets ſound, and Drums beat, when neither Trumpeter nor Drummer have been near the Place. They have ſeen Chairs and Stools move up and down a Room, when no Body has touch'd them, with many other Things full as ſtrange. Thus will they tell Stories

of

of this Nature from Morning to Night, tho' when they have done, they ſay nothing to the Purpoſe. For ſuppoſe that all theſe Stories were unqueſtionably true, yet they wou'd not ſuffice to prove *Witchcraft*. I confeſs indeed they would evince the being of Spirits, a Thing which no Wiſe Man can deny, tho' he doth not believe it. For it is one Thing to doubt, and another to deny. For my own Part, I firmly believe that there are many Thouſands of Spirits, made of an *Incorporeal Matter*, too fine to be perceiv'd by the Senſes of Men. Nor will I contradict the Authority of ſo many in the World, who affirm they have heard the ſtrange Things which I juſt now mention'd; ſuppoſing that theſe Spirits may often play mad Tricks among us. But ſtill I demand a Reaſon why I ſhould believe that they do ſo, upon the Account of a Contract made with any Man or Woman; for till this is prov'd, the Queſtion of *Witchcraft* ſtands undetermin'd.

Well then, how do the Affirmers of it go about to prove, that any Man or Woman is Intereſted in theſe *Deviliſh Pranks?* Why, truly, by Telling ſuch Stories as theſe; namely, That the Perſons tormented by Devils, have fallen into their Fits at the Sight, or upon the Touch of ſuſpected *Witches:* As alſo that Perſons, thus tormented, have ſeen the ſuſpected *Witches* in this or that Place of the Room, where no Stander by elſe could ſee any Thing at all, *&c.* Now here is to be obſerv'd, that theſe Kind of Stories are far different from thoſe, which, I ſaid before, did evince the Being of Spirits; for they are atteſted by numerous Authorities,

thorities, and worthy of Credit. But these are quite contrary, and founded partly in the *Jugling Delusions* of *Confederated Impostors*, partly in the *Errors* or *ridiculous Mistakes* of *Vulgar Rumours*. Nevertheless, that I may not be too strict with my Adversaries, I care not if I grant some of these Stories to be true. For Instance; That there have been Persons vex'd by *Devils* at the Sight, or upon the Touch of suspected *Witches*, and quiet again when they were parted: For tho' I should grant this, I see no Reason whereby to conclude there are no such Beings as *Witches*, but rather that these Spirits, who are so Frolick and Gamesome in doing us Mischief, when they perceive Persons suspected to have set them at Work, may, on Purpose, so manage their malicious Tricks, as to confirm the Suspicion, promote the Accusation, procure the Condemnation of these miserable Wretches; and then may account it the Cream of their malicious Tricks to see poor Innocent People Hang'd. Now this Answer of mine, altho' it be needless, and *ex abundanti*, is far more easy and unconstrain'd than any Thing that the contrary Opinion can answer to those Objections, which may be made against that Absurd and Ridiculous Conceit of Seeing a *Witch* present, that is really at many Miles Distance.

Again, those that stand up for the Being of this Fictitious Power, are wont to say, that immediately upon the Threatning or Cursing used by this or that Person, such or such an Accident hath happen'd to the Person so Threatned and Cursed. These Men would do well to consider, that this World hath stood many Thousand Years, and is of vast Extent, containing many Countries, or Nations full of Men that have divers Interests and Passions; wherefore it is not to be wonder'd at, if there hath often happen'd in it a notable concurrence of Events. 'Tis certain that poor old People, when they are abus'd by the Insulting Petulancy of others, being unable to right themselves, either at Law or at Combat, for want of Money,

Money, and Strength of Body, do oftentimes vent the Paſſion of their Diſcontented Souls in Threats and Curſes. 'Tis alſo certain, that many Men troubled with Diſeaſes of the Head or Heart, ſeem to be perfect Health, and yet fall down Dead of a ſudden. Now if theſe Two Accidents ſhould meet together, I ſhould ſee nothing but what is Natural, nor ſhould I cry out upon the *Devil* and *Witchcraft*.

But methinks I hear ſome *Zealots* Object, and ſay, with great Vehemence, and Aſſurance: *What need there be any Diſpute about theſe Stories, ſince Parties themſelves, as this Woman in particular, have Confeſſed their own* Witchcraft; *and can there be any Thing clearer than Self-Confeſſion?* To this I anſwer, That the Wiſeſt Men in the World may be brought, by Impriſonment and Torture, to confeſs any thing, whether it be True or Falſe; as many Miſerable Creatures confeſſing themſelves *Witches*, have had their Confeſſions extorted from them by ſuch curſed Means. Beſides, I am not to doubt, but ſome poor, ſilly, melancholy old Wretches have really believ'd themſelves *Witches*, and to be guilty of thoſe Actions, which not only their fooliſh Neighbours, but Men that are call'd *Worſhipful*, have charged them with. Nor is it to be wonder'd at by any one that conſiders the ſtrange Effects of Melancholy, eſpecially if heightned by Poverty, or want of Good Diet, by Ignorance, Solitarineſs, and Old Age. For that ſuch People take their very Dreams to be real Viſions and Truths, I am ſure, not only by Conſequences drawn from their Actions, reported in Books, but by Experience alſo of my own Acquaintance. The Truth is, want of Knowledge in the Art of Phyſick makes Men attribute mere Natural Diſtempers to Spirits; Nay, Phyſicians themſelves, who have ſhewn Excellency of Skill in Anotomy and Chymiſtry, perhaps have added little or nothing to the Diagnoſtick part of Diſeaſes, ſo happily begun by *Hippocrates*. Hence it is that we

are ſtill in the Dark, as to the Abſtruſer Diſtempers of Human Bodies, eſpecially ſuch as ariſe from Melancholy; which are of ſo many Sorts, and have ſuch wonderful Effects, that whoſoever ſhould rightly Deſcribe them, and make them plainly Manifeſt, would Diſcover to us an unknown World full of unheard of prodigious Monſters. Thus I have ſufficiently Anſwered the moſt material Objections, not thinking it worth the while to inſiſt upon every Triffle, ſuch as this is. Why do you not believe that, which ſo many Thouſands of Wiſe Men in the World have believed? Surely they could not all be deceived, *&c.* As if a Man did not make Proclamation of his own Folly, by ſuch an Argument, when the various Religions that have been in the World, are more than enough to convince any Rational Perſon, how Abſurd and Ridiculous the Wiſeſt of Men are in Matters of Opinion or Belief.

By this time I cannot chuſe but wonder, *Sixthly*, at the ſpreading of this fooliſh Opinion amongſt Men, and its taking ſuch deep Root in their Minds; but then I ceaſe admiring when I Conſider, That ſome Men are Knaves, others are Fools, and that all have Fear implanted in them by Nature, the very ſtrongeſt of all their Paſſions: For, though it be an Impious and Irrational Saying, *That* Fear *was the firſt Thing that brought Gods into the World*; yet I am not apt to believe, *It firſt of all brought in thoſe Omnipotent* Witches *that contract with Devils.* Now, that *Fear* very frequently, preſents *Apparations* to Melancholick and Diſeas'd Perſons, was well

enough known to thoſe who govern'd the Antient World, eſpecially the *Eaſtern* Parts of it, for they were wiſe *Politicians*, Men famous in their Generations, and very much experienced in the Nature of Mankind. Wherefore knowing how Furious and Headſtrong a Beaſt, the Multitude is, not to be dealt with, unleſs you come as it were on their blind Side, that is, unleſs you take them by the weakeſt Part, and lay hold of their Paſſion of Fear, (I ſay knowing this) they promoted theſe People, and improv'd them for the Deſigns of Government. Hence it came to paſs that whatſoever was extraordinary in Nature,& apt to aſtoniſh,was,by them,aſcrib'd to theſeApparations or Spirits; Namely in the upper Regions of the Heavens, the Eclypſes of the Sun and Moon, Thunder and Lightning in the Clouds, Peſtilential Seaſons, as alſo thoſe of Famine here below, likewiſe the moſt hideous of Diſeaſes, whether they were ſtrange Kinds of Tumours in the Body, or Convulſion Fits,or ſeveral Sorts of Madneſs, *&c.* For the Remedying of which diſaſtrous Accident, and the Taking away of their malignant Effects, many Charms or Spells were ordain'd; many Exerciſing or Conjuring Prayers were invented; In a Word, many Religious Rites or Ceremonies of Worſhip were inſtituted with a World of Vanity and Fancy. The *Egyptians*, that Anitent and Wiſe People, the very Fathers of Learning, had a Reſpect unto theſe Kind of Spirits in their Publick Worſhip, as may be gather'd from *Plutarch* in his Treatiſe concerning the Decay

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of Oracles, where he brings in this Conſideration of their Religious Rites, as a probable Argument that they were the firſt *Opiners* of *Dæmons*; I mean, the firſt that brought in the Opinion of the Exiſtence of Devils.

In proceſs of Time, thoſe Actions of the Prieſts, and great Politicians of the World, began to be imitated by Private Perſons, not only Men, but Women alſo, ſuch as ſhe was that dwelt at *Endor*; for what will not ſome attempt to do, when a *neceſſitous Poverty* doth torment them with a greedy *deſire of Gain*? Theſe kind of *ſhirking People*, a Generation of *impudent Liars*, *Mountebanks in Divinity and Phyſick*, have all along peſter'd the Age in which they lived. *Hipocrates*, Treating περὶ ἱερῆς νόσου, or *the Falling-Sickneſs*, hath excellently well deſcrib'd the *Knaviſh Impoſtures* of ſome in his Times, who, to cloak their Ignorance of that Diſeaſe, pretended it came immediately from the *Hand of God*, and therefore was to be Cured with certain *Expiations* and *Charms*. *Theſe Men*, ſays he, *had nothing but God in their Mouths, and yet, notwithſtanding this Holineſs, they baſely deluded the People with Magick Cheats*: So alſo did the Heathen Divines, I mean their pretended *Philoſophers*, Men full of Words and Beards, who, for the love of Gain and a Croud of Diſciples, would frequently make ſhew of, I know not what, *Sublimity of Knowledge*, and *Intimate Acquaintance with the Deity*, by vertue whereof they would undertake to *Charm* and *Exorciſe* Evil Spirits. *Lucian*, in his Dialogue, Entituled,

φιλοψεύδεις, or *Lovers of Lies*, makes very good Sport with theſe ſort of Fellows.

Now when *Hunger* and *Covetouſneſs* had engaged private Perſons in the ſame *Knaviſh Impoſtures*, which the *Prieſts* ſet on Foot out of *Policy*, they not enduring to ſee their Office invaded, did declare unto the World, *That all ſuch as attempted Sacred Things, contrary to the due Rights and Ceremonies, were ſo far from any Communion with the Gods, that they were rather Abandon'd by them, and expos'd to the Society of Evil Spirits; by which Converſation they became full of Malice, and all ſorts of Vice and Miſchief, like unto the Devils, with whom they converſed:* For that this was the Aſſertion of the Antient *Chaldean Prieſts*, is evident; in that Treatiſe of *Jamblichus*, which treats of the Myſteries of the *Egyptians*, *Chaldeans*, and *Aſſyrians*. And thus, I ſuppoſe, I have given a true Account of the Riſe and Origin of *Witchcraft*.

But howſoever this Opinion of *Witches* might, probably, take its firſt Riſe in the *Eaſtern Parts*, it quickly alſo came into the *Weſt*, and there, at length, it very much prevailed, by reaſon of the *Platonick Philoſophy*: For theſe Men being addicted to Fables and Allegories, became ſo vain, as to turn thoſe Fables and Allegories into Reality. In a word, whoſoever reads the *Platonick* Writings, muſt find them full of confident Diſcourſe, about what they did not underſtand, concerning the *Gods*, *Dæmons*, and *Spirits of Men*. Much is their Talk of a *Familiar Spirit* which every Man hath, calling it ſometimes, the, ὁ οἰκεῖ ſometimes ὁ σύνων, ſometimes the ὁ ἐιληχως ἡμας δαίμων.

δαίμων. Nor is it to be wonder'd at, if *Chriſtian* Authors have too much exceeded on ſuch Subjects, in regard 'tis well enough known how much the *Primitive Chriſtians* admir'd the *Platonick Sect.* Nor is it unlikely, that in their frequent *Exorciſings* and *Conjurations*, they did but imitate the *Platonicks*, who themſelves did, therein, but tread in the Steps of the Antient *Egyptian Prieſts*: Amongſt whom, it's uſual to Conjure the Devils, with ſtrange kinds of Threats, *viz.* That if they would not do as the Prieſts would have them, *They would tear the Heavens aſſunder, and reveal the Secret of Iſis*, as may be ſeen in *Jamblicus*, whom I have before quoted.

Thus am I come to a Period, to the ſatisfaction, I hope, of the Gentleman that put me upon this Work, by his Deſire to me in writing, and thoſe that give themſelves the Trouble of reading it; and if I have advanc'd Opinions contrary to thoſe of the Worſhipful Sir *Henry Chauncey*, whoſe great Age may excuſe the Commitment of thePerſon that occaſions this Diſſertation, and cannot join with the Reverend Clergymen, whoſe Depoſitions were thought of weight enough, by the Jury, to bring her in Guilty, and whoſe Prayers of ſufficient Efficacy to work a Miracle, and drive the Devil out of the poor ſickly Creature, ſuppos'd to be *Bewitch'd*; it is to be preſum'd I ſhall not be thought to fall under the Statute of *Defamation*, or be denied the *Benefit of my Clergy.* To ſum up the whole, I have, in the *Firſt Place*, ſhewn, That there is no ſuch Thing as a Witch in Scripture.

Secondly,

Secondly, That it took its Beginning from Heathen Fables. *Thirdly*, That it was afterwards Improved by Papal Impoſtures. In the *Fourth Place*, I have produc'd ſeveral Arguments againſt the Affirmers of Witchcraft. *Fifthly*, I have anſwer'd other Arguments to the Contrary. *Sixthly*, and Laſtly, I have endeavour'd to ſhew, by what Means this Opinion of Witches came into the World, all which I have handled Succinctly, pointing as it were, at the Heads of Things, and leaving it to ſome abler Pen, to handle this Queſtion more at large: A thing which is very uſeful to be done, for if the Doctrine of *Witchcraft* ſhould be carried up to a Hight, and the Inquiſition after it ſhould be intruſted in the Hands of *Ambitious*, *Covetous*, and *Malicious Men*, it would prove of more fatal Conſequence to the Lives and Safety of Mankind, than that Antient Heatheniſh Cuſtom of *Sacrificing Men to Idols*; inſomuch, that we ſtand in need of another *Hercules Liberator*, who, as the former freed the World from *Human Sacrifices*, ſhould, in like manner, Travel from Country to Country, and by his all-commanding Authority, free it from the evil and baſe Cuſtom of *Impriſoning People to confeſs themſelves* Witches, *and Burning them after extorted Confeſſions*. Surely the Blood of *Mankind* ought not to be ſo cheap, nor ſo eaſily to be ſhed, by ſuch who under the Name of God, gratify exorbitant Paſſions and Selfiſh-Ends; for without Queſtion, under this ſide of Heaven, there is nothing ſo Sacred as the Life of Man, for the Preſervation whereof,

all

all Policies or Forms of Government, all Laws and Magiſtrates are moſt eſpecially ordain'd. Wherefore I take the Liberty to affirm, That this Diſcourſe of mine, attempting to prove the Vanity and Impoſſibility of *Witchcraft*, is ſo far from any deſerved Cenſure and Blame, that it rather merits Commendation and Praiſe, if I can but in the leaſt meaſure contribute to the ſaving of the Lives of my Fellow Creatures.

F I N I S.